

The Baptiste Group: Informational letter to Shelby County Schools

Mission: Reunifying unaccompanied children with their families while providing shelter and services in a nurturing and therapeutic environment.

Our Program

The Baptiste Group is one of the providers of shelter services for unaccompanied children in the United States and has been awarded a federal grant for a care provider facility in Tennessee. The Baptiste Group's mission is to provide humanitarian services to children in a nurturing environment. The programs encourage the development of personal and academic skills and offer an array of services, including case management, legal services, medical/dental, educational (onsite), vocational, recreational, and religious services. These services are provided by trained professionals. The staff is there 24 hours a day to both monitor and provide support for the needs of the children during their stay.

Ideally, the children will live at The Baptiste Group's facility for an average of 30 days until arrangements are made to reunite the youth with relatives. On occasion, a child with a complicated legal or reunification case may stay longer than the average, and The Baptiste Group can readily accommodate a longer placement if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child. Longer lengths of stay can range anywhere between 30 days to several months.

The Baptiste Group's facility will be state licensed under the Tennessee Department of Human Services and must meet federal requirements to ensure a high level of quality of care. The facility, which operates under cooperative agreements and contracts, provide children with classroom education, healthcare, socialization/recreation, family reunification, access to legal services, and case management.

Not all unaccompanied children are eligible for placement in The Baptiste Group's facility. For example, The Baptiste Group does not take on children who require a higher level of care due to a documented criminal history. Likewise, children with certain special needs (for example, pregnant/parent, acute medical needs, mental health concerns) or who have no viable sponsor with whom to reunite are placed in other programs, such as short and long-term foster care.

Similarly, the department provides certain special programs that serve these children with acute medical and mental health needs.

Those youth in our care for more than 20 days are provided with an in-debt Case Summary/Individual Service Plan (CS/ISP), which is a multidisciplinary assessment completed by case management, education, youth care, medical, and clinical staff. The CS/ISP will be completed no more than 30 days of the child's placement.

The facility will work in accordance with Tennessee licensing requirements and will consist of a Director, Assistant Director, Administrative staff, Clinicians, Case Managers, Medical Coordinator, Cooks, Security Guards, Custodians and Youth Care Workers (direct care staff). We strive to design and maintain a child-friendly facility. For example, we will use accented colors throughout the premises, whimsical décor, and comfortable furnishings that help to establish a rapport with children.

Upon their entrance to the facility, we provide the children with a hot meal, shower, and a phone call to their families. All children receive new sets of clothing, sleepwear, shoes, flip flops and hygiene kits. Within 24 hours of arrival, we introduce children to their individual case manager and provide them with a detailed orientation of the program and services offered. TBG staff ensure that the children understand their rights and that they are treated fairly at all times.

All children at the facility will take part in daily structured activities and six hours of daily educational classroom time. In accordance with federal requirements, The Baptiste Group also provides recreation and leisure time that includes daily activities. Daily activities consist of a minimum of one hour of structured leisure activities, such as recreational reading/viewing of books, writing letters, board games, arts and crafts, or computer time. Daily activities also consist of a minimum of one hour each weekday and three hours each weekend of structured large muscle outdoor activity.

Security is a top priority at our facility. Our direct care staff provides 24-hour supervision and care for the children with a staffing ratio of one staff to every eight children (1:8) during waking hours. To ensure that children are appropriately supervised at all times, The Baptiste Group provides extensive training to all of its staff, including 40 hours of new employee orientation, 40 hours of on-the-job training, Youth Care Worker manual training, crisis prevention and intervention, supervision and documentation, and more. The facility will also be staffed with security guards 24-hours a day along with controlled access to the building.

Economic Benefits to the Community

The TBG facility will have a positive impact on the community. As currently budgeted, it would infuse millions of dollars each year into the local economy and create approximately 120 new jobs for local residents. In addition, The Baptiste Group budgets over \$500,000 in start-up costs for the acquisition of items such as furnishings, computers, and electronic equipment, office supplies, kitchen supplies, and recreational equipment. Many of these goods and services will come from the local community.

Furthermore, The Baptiste Group would purchase a number of tangible items needed to run the program from local businesses (e.g., clothing for the children, medical supplies, educational supplies, food) and contract with local vendors to provide ancillary services to the program (plumbers, doctors, dentists, etc.)

For all these reasons, The Baptiste Group would be a good neighbor and valued member of the community. Our program would bring new money and jobs to Shelby County and fit very well into the surrounding neighborhood.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Baptiste'.

Gretchen Baptiste
The Baptiste Group
Vice President